

EARLY LEARNING FACT SHEET

Promoting early learning and development Birth to 8

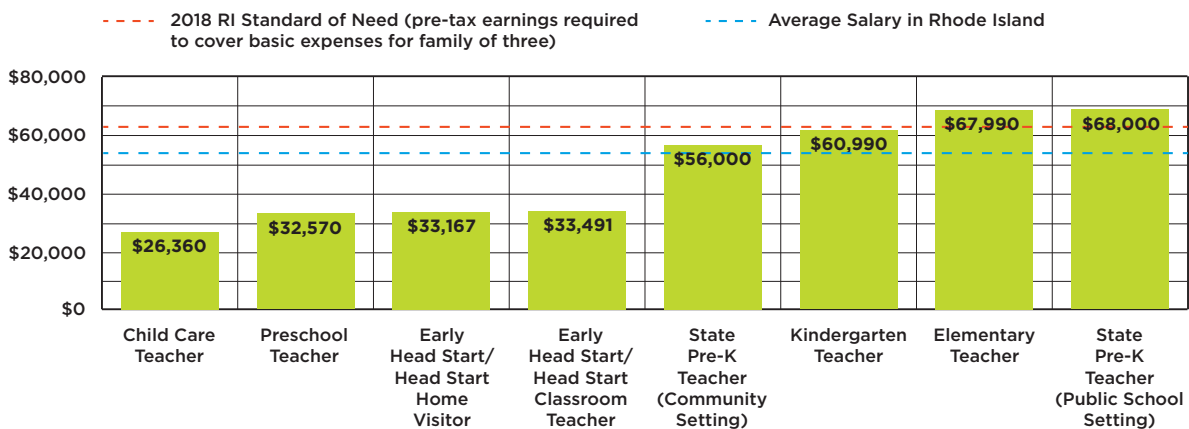
Focus on Early Childhood Educator Compensation

Babies and young children learn foundational skills through day-to-day interactions with their family members and with the people who care for and teach them in early care and education programs. The quality of children's early learning experiences depends on early educators' skills, knowledge, and well-being, yet the wages paid to early educators in Rhode Island and the U.S. make it very challenging to recruit skilled educators to enter and remain in the field, lead to high teacher turnover rates, and negatively impact the quality of children's daily experiences.¹

There is national consensus that caring for and teaching young children, including babies, requires expert knowledge and skills equivalent to teaching older children in grades K-12. The National Research Council and National Academy of Sciences have found that all educators of children birth through age eight should have a bachelor's degree with specialization in child development and early learning – and they call for a significant increase in public funding for child care and early learning programs in order to achieve this goal.^{2,3}

Across the U.S., the younger the child in a child development or education program, the lower the teacher pay is. There is a significant wage discrepancy for early childhood teachers when compared with teachers in the K-12 system, and infant/toddler teachers with bachelor's degrees face the largest wage discrepancy, earning more than \$8,000 less per year than similarly qualified preschool teachers.⁴

EDUCATORS' AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARIES, RHODE ISLAND, 2017



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). May 2017 state occupational employment and wage estimates. Retrieved August 30, 2019, from www.bls.gov. Head Start Program Information Report - 2017 summary report - Rhode Island. Retrieved August 30, 2019, from <https://training01.hsesinfo.org>. Friedman-Krauss, A., et al. (2019). *The state of preschool 2018*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. *The 2018 Rhode Island standard of need*. (2018). Providence, RI: Economic Progress Institute.

Early Intervention and family home visiting programs also struggle to pay competitive wages for qualified and effective professionals to work with families with infants and toddlers and implement evidence-based coaching strategies and curricula to improve child and family outcomes. In Rhode Island, salaries for Early Interventionists range from \$28,080 to \$46,000 per year, and most family home visiting professionals earn salaries between \$30,430 and \$46,000 per year.⁵

Diversity is a Strength of the Early Childhood Teaching Workforce

Across the U.S. and in Rhode Island, the child population is growing increasingly diverse. With 45% of infants and toddlers in Rhode Island identifying as non-White, the state is just behind the national figure of 51% non-White. Experts recognize the benefits of a diverse teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of the child population.^{6,7}

Nationally, the early childhood teaching workforce is more culturally and linguistically diverse than the K-12 workforce with 37% of teaching staff in centers and in family child care homes identifying as a person of color while only 18% of K-12 teachers are non-White.^{8,9}

In 2014 in Rhode Island, 20% of teaching staff in early childhood centers and 70% of licensed family child care providers were non-White. The same survey found that 8% of teachers in centers and 17% of family child care providers were fluent in both English and Spanish. As of 2016, less than 5% of K-12 teachers in Rhode Island were non-White and only 2% were Hispanic.^{10,11}

Strategies to Improve Early Childhood Educator Wages

The root cause of low pay for early childhood educators is inadequate public funding. Parents cannot afford to pay more than 7% of their family income for child care, so there is strong pressure on programs to keep tuition rates lower than the levels needed to provide competitive salaries. Early Intervention and family home visiting programs depend on public funding streams (and private health insurance for Early Intervention) to provide services to children with no co-payments or tuition expected from families. Strong public funding streams allow early childhood educators to remain in the field and earn higher wages.^{12,13}

Rhode Island has adopted two key early childhood educator compensation strategies. Our State Pre-K program is recognized for meeting national quality standards with adequate funding to pay Pre-K teacher salaries that match the starting salaries of elementary school teachers. In addition, Rhode Island is one of 22 states implementing the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood model to support college degree completion and reduce turnover of early childhood educators by providing scholarship assistance and periodic bonuses or wage increases in partnership with early childhood program employers.^{14,15}

Across the U.S., 15 states have implemented ongoing wage supplements to reduce turnover of qualified and effective early childhood educators. However, these initiatives reach less than two percent of the workforce.¹⁶

References

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^{3,16} National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *Transforming the financing of early care and education*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

⁵ Rhode Island Department of Health and Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, 2019.

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^{7,9} *The state of racial diversity in the educator workforce*. (2016). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development.

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¹¹ *Teacher diversity in Rhode Island*. (2016). Providence, RI: Latino Policy Institute at Roger Williams University.

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